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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5307  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1423  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 6261  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000527

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAI MFA PERMSEC POSITIVE ABOUT U.S. ENGAGEMENT  
WITH ASEAN; ASEAN ADDRESSING ROHINGYA ISSUE

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Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle, reason: 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. EAP Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) and U.S. Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs Scot Marciel discussed a wide range of issues with Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Permanent Secretary Virasakdi Futrakul on the margins of the ASEAN Summit on February 28. Virasakdi touched upon the positive impact that Secretary of State Clinton's visit to Jakarta and the ASEAN Secretariat has had on ASEAN and Thailand's interest in her upcoming visit in July for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Virasakdi also expressed an interest in arranging a meeting between Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and President Obama. In regards to the ongoing ASEAN Summit, Virasakdi noted that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting had focused on Burma, including the Rohingya issue. He also stated that Burma had agreed to extend the Tripartite Core Group Mandate (TCG) for one year. Virasakdi expressed the disappointment of the RTG in the State Department's release of its Country Report on Human Rights Practices, specifically mentioning Thailand's Lese Majeste law (septel). End Summary.

BILATERAL ISSUES: ASEAN AND VISITS  
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12. (C) Ambassador Marciel engaged MFA Permanent Secretary Virasakdi February 28 at a meeting on the margins of the ASEAN Summit in Cha Am-Hua Hin regarding U.S.-Thai bilateral relations and ASEAN issues. Virasakdi said that the RTG and ASEAN as a whole had responded very positively to the Obama administration's engagement with Asia and ASEAN. He explained that Secretary Clinton's trip to Jakarta had had a very positive impression on the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, who met February 27. He stated that it would be very good if Secretary Clinton could have U.S. accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) ready in hand for her July visit for the ARF/Post Ministerial Conference (PMC). Ambassador Marciel took on board Virasakdi's points and welcomed Virasakdi's positive feedback on the Clinton visit to Jakarta.

13. (C) Virasakdi expressed a great interest in the possibility of PM Abhisit meeting with President Barack Obama on the margins of the April G-20 Summit in London. Virasakdi stated that he was looking forward to President Obama attending the APEC Summit in Singapore. He also said FM Kasit, during his upcoming visit to Washington, likely would express interest in an Abhisit visit to Washington.

Virasakdi probed USG interest in scheduling the delayed U.S.-ASEAN 30th anniversary Summit. Ambassador Marciel explained that he would relay Thai interest in high-level engagement, including a U.S.-ASEAN Summit. He emphasized in general the strong U.S. interest in intensified engagement with the ASEAN region.

¶4. (C) Virasakdi mentioned that the Thai Deputy Trade Minister Alongkorn would go to Washington to make a presentation on IPR matters. Virasakdi reassured Ambassador Marciel that compulsory licensing was not going to be a difficult issue and that the Thai steps represented good news for the pharmaceutical industry. Virasakdi inquired about the possibility of a U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Ambassador Marciel explained that the USG would be better prepared to engage in dialogue on high-level trade policy questions after the upcoming confirmation of a new U.S. Trade Representative.

Rohingya

¶5. (C) Virasakdi stated that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting had focused on Burma, including the issue of Rohingyas. The Malaysian FM in particular had pressed the Burmese on the issue. He said that Burma did not regard the Rohingyas as citizens, claiming they were Bengali Muslims. The Burmese FM said Burma would accept the repatriation of Rohingyas only under the condition that they had been officially registered as residents in the Rakhine State. He noted that UNHCR maintained that a pre-condition of their repatriation must be that they can return home safely. Simultaneously, Malaysia pushed in the FM meeting for Burmese agreement to let ASEAN work with Burmese authorities to

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create better conditions in the Rakhine State.

¶6. (C) Virasakdi explained that, in order to solve the Rohingya issue, the Ambassadors from all affected countries had been invited to meet to discuss how to deal with this issue. Virasakdi commented that one of the largest issues in dealing with the Rohingyas was the human trafficking rings that were smuggling people across the border into Thailand. He expressed a need for UNHCR to call a meeting to mobilize international resources; Thailand favored drawing up a standard operating procedure (SOP) to eliminate human trafficking. Virasakdi commented that the RTG needed to balance its security and immigration law with humanitarian needs. Ambassador Marciel took note of Virasakdi's points, agreeing that there were both security and humanitarian dimensions to the issue.

Tripartite Core Group Assistance

¶7. (C) Regarding the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) and assistance in the Irrawaddy Delta region of Burma, Virasakdi stated that Burma would agree to extend the mandate of the TCG for one more year, through July 2010. He said that there was no assurance that it would be extended after next year. Ambassador Marciel welcomed the news of the mandate's likely extension, and expressed hope the U.S. and Thailand could continue to consult about how best to encourage progress in Burma.

¶8. (U) Ambassador Marciel has cleared this cable.  
JOHN